FBI files renew questions on JFK

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By BOB DUDNEY
Times Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Shortly after FBI headquarters opened its doors today, the most unsettling thought about the assassination of President Kennedy once again arose in much the same way that the Warren Commission expressed it years ago.

"Because of the difficulty of proving negatives to a certainty," the commission said, "the possibility of others being involved with Oswald . . . cannot be rejected categorically. But if there is any such evidence, it has been beyond the reach of all of the investigative agencies and resources of the United States."

With the release of some 40,001 pages from the FBI's massive file on the slaying in Dallas, the central question still is whether Lee Harvey Oswald, the presumed assassin, acted in concert with still unknown conspirators. The new FBI material, rather than laying the controversy to rest, appears destined to deepen it.

Those convinced that the assassination was indeed part of a continuing conspiracy beyond the reach of the law will be examining the long-secret FBI papers for new clues and insights into the events of Nov. 22, 1963, and afterward, especially data on Oswald himself. The Warren Commission concluded Oswald was the lone assassin.

Others who are familiar with the 80,000-page file, the second half of which will be released next month, claim it gives solid basis to the commission's findings in 1964, and the essence of the volume is reflected in those FBI papers made public during the official investigation at the time.

As the new materials became public, a number of critical areas have become obvious targets of interest, chief of which may be Oswald's visit to Mexico City several weeks before the assassination.

The accused assassin is known to have visited the Soviet embassy and Cuban consulate during this trip. The commission concluded that the intent was to acquire a visa for travel to Cuba based on Oswald's past association with pro-Cuban groups and avowed Communist beliefs. The Central Intelligence Agency also had intercepted telephone calls from Oswald to the embassies during routine surveillance.

But the Mexico City trip has loomed as a dark mystery to others suspicious of the possible involvement of regular Cu-

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Start of investigation marked by confusion

By ROY E. BODE
Times Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The initial FBI investigation of President John F. Kennedy's assassination shows a frantic search for a domestic or foreign conspiracy marked by chaos and misinformation, according to previously secret agency documents made public today.

Only a handful of reporters showed up at the Justice Department for the

FBI records show Oswald told wife about Walker shooting, Page 27-A

long awaited and highly publicized opening of the half-ton of documents, which consisted mainly of interoffice memos.

The documents show the massive FBI investigation started less than a hour after shots were fired at Kennedy's motorcade as it wound through downtown Dallas.

"Get everyone involved in shooting the President and get them fast," said an urgent message on a Justice Department letterhead from someone identified only as James Walsh.

A few hours later on Nov. 22, 1963, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover ordered his agents to "contact all informants — security, racial and criminal — as well as other sources for information bearing on the assassination of President Kennedy."

He added the whereabouts of "bombing suspects, all khown Klansmen and hate-group members and known racial extremists" and any others "possibly involved" were to be determined immediately.

The investigation quickly focused on Lee Harvey Oswald and, within 48 hours, it widened to include the man who shot him, Jack Ruby.

The picture that emerges from the files shows the probe widening frantically to determine whether the assassination and Oswald's murder was part of a domestic or foreign conspiracy.

Oswald's background was traced quickly back to his activities in the Soviet Union and the files indicated the agency searched thoroughly for any Communist connection or underworld ties with Ruby.

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Hoover ordered hunt for possible suspects

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A link with Cuba was one possibility investigated by the bureau.

Much of the early information came from sketchy — and often incorrect — radio reports from Dallas stations.

Hoover's embarrassment was clearly evident as he explained in a mid-afternoon memo how he had telephoned the president's brother, Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, and told him the president was "very, very critical."

"The attorney general then told me the president had died," Hoover's 1:10 p.m. memo said. (The president's death had officially been announced 10 minutes earlier.)

Early reports from Dallas Special Agent in Charge Gordon Shanklin provided much false information to Hoover, who quickly spread it to other governmental entities, the memos show.

There were — for instance — reports from the Dallas agent that a Secret Service agent had been killed and that a black man had fired "a Winchester rifle" from the fourth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building.

At the time this report got to Hoover, the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle had not been removed from between two boxes and had not been examined. Three black depository workers had been leaning out of a fifth-floor window, looking upward to the sixth-floor perch where shots had come from and the rumors that a Secret Service man had been shot or killed were still rife among investigators though nobody could determine the authenticity of the rumor.

Other files show the U.S. Embassy in Rome sent Hoover a name from an American newspaper columnist there who claimed the Spanish ambassador to Italy had shown him a report from the Spanish Intelligence Service claiming Fidel Castro was behind the assassination.

The columnist said, as he understood the report, Castro was "very much disturbed" by the deaths of the Diem brothers in Vietnam and felt they had been plotted by the CIA. South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, chief of South Vietnames secret police, were killed Nov. 1, 1963 in a military coup.

The intelligence report also reportedly said Castro was upset "by the apparent rapport established between President Kennedy and Premier (Nikita) Krushchev ... and felt that some dire act was needed to destroy this rapprot."

The FBI cables the U.S. Embassy in Madrid asking it to check further with Spanish intelligence.

Elsewhere in the documents, FBI officials in Dallas asked Hoover's office to check passport records, CIA and State Department sources to determine if Ruby had been to Havana. Nothing apparently was found.

Much of the material details the painstaking manner in which the FBI went about assembling the backgrounds of Oswald and Ruby.

Hundreds of people who had reportedly made threatening remarks about the president also were investigated and leads were followed even when they apparently were worthless.

For example, an agent in Los Angeles listened to a convict in a California prison explain he had met Ruby about 10 years earlier while he was operating a club in Dallas.

J. Edgar Hoover ...
... telephoned Robert Kennedy

"The point that (he) made the most of (was) that for the period of some three years that he associated with Ruby in various questionable activities, Ruby was extremely fond of fried chicken and he had noticed in news reports that Oswald had apparently left some evidence of eating chicken behind when he fled the scene of the assassination," the agent wrote in a report to Hoover.

An agent in Utah filed a report a few days after the assassination about a phone call from someone claiming that President Kennedy was not dead and his apparent shooting "was a gigantic hoax engineered by the FBI to trap the Mafia." The agent said he was unable to obtain further information because he had to take a call regarding the kidnapping of Frank Sinatra Jr.

Police told IRA plotted revenge in Dallas after Kennedy death

Times Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — An anonymous caller warned the Orange County (Calif.) Sheriff's Office that the Irish Republican Army was planning to "commit mayhem" on Dallas after the assassination of President Kennedy, an FBI document says.

The report of an FBI agent in Los Angeles said the caller told a sheriff's captain he was told of the plan by a relative in England.

The IRA, the caller said, would attempt to get a company of IRA members into the United States via Air Lingas and, if unsuccessful, they would enter the country individually "for the purpose of going to Dallas to commit mayhem on that city."

The sheriff's captain concluded that the caller was "sane and well-educated," the agent wrote.

No terrorist incidents were reported in Dallas following the assassination. The IRA is a militant organization which has been fighting against British dominance in Ireland for years.

President Kennedy was of Irish heritage.